MARVEL

011

[dest_]
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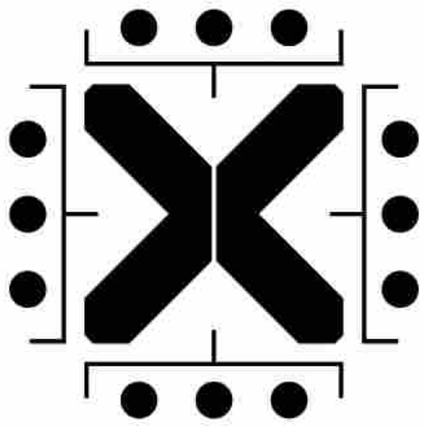
[_of_X]

GILLEN
WERNECK
CURIEL

IMMORTAL X-MEN

BROOKS

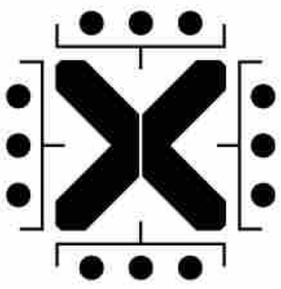


[Immortal_[0.11]

For us, the chief point of interest is the place where the game is played. Generally, it is a simple circle, *dyutamandalam*, drawn on the ground. The circle as such, however, has a magic significance. It is drawn with great care, all sorts of precautions being taken against cheating.

-- JOHAN HUIZINGA,
HOMO LUDENS: A STUDY OF THE PLAY ELEMENT IN CULTURE

[Immortal_[0.11]
[Immortal_[0.11]



[Immortal_[0.11]
[Immortal_[0.11]

Krakoa.

VIE: In my absence, I was relying on them to do one simple thing: Make this work.

And instead...

Ready to proceed, ma'am.

Doug. Let's begin.

Who do you want first, Ororo?

As much as I hate it, there's only one place to start.

Xavier.

Charles.

I have known Charles Xavier for a long time.

He accused me of hubris.

Him.

He accused *me* of hubris.

You got it.

I was happy and loved in a place where I was needed, and he dragged me out to help save *his* project.

He came and told me that my life caring for a people was a lie.

Because I *wasn't* a god.

The man who was planning a paradise on Earth accused *me* of hubris.

And now, once more, I am pulled away from a place where I am needed...

...and expected to rescue *his* plans.

Physically and psychically secured, ma'am.

What is this?

Necessary. I'll explain later.

Doug-- bring up the rest...

"...one by one."

All secured, ma'am.

Good. Let's move.

Forge is waiting.

Is this brusque handling *really* necessary?

Where I'm from, your words were a brand burned into trillions of minds.

I saw the results of your worst fears. I need to be careful.

I'm sorry for that, but all we do is to try to prevent it. We went voluntarily to the Pit, and, trust me, it is not *pleasant* down there.

We four have done everything to help secure Krakoa's future.

There. I can't stand it anymore.

Yes. *NOW.*

When it's too late.

Oh, Charles...

...what did you *do?*

[00_mutants_of_X]
[00_the_world__X]

IMMORTAL

SINS DON'T WASH AWAY.

Through the judicious use of Moira clones to create save points in the timeline, Sinister successfully managed to assassinate Xavier, Hope, Exodus and Emma Frost. However, a new branch of the timeline was created when Sinister's Moira clones were stolen and his sinisterized versions of mutantkind and chimera experiments were allowed to run wild without Sinister's control. After one thousand years of searching and battling for control over the Moira clones, the timeline was finally reset -- but the effects of that timeline have found ways to echo back into the present day.

Rasputin IV has been sent back to the present, providing the damning evidence needed to convict Sinister. Sinister remembers his failed attempt to achieve Dominion status but is unable to warn the rest of the Quiet Council of the other threats at play. A shame, as Mother Righteous, herself a version of Sinister, has managed to send back the information she learned in the now collapsed timeline to herself -- allowing her to position herself as an ally to the Quiet Council...though her true machinations lay hidden.

[AUTUMN]

[PROFESSOR X]

[HOPE SUMMERS]

[DESTINY]

[SUMMER]

[NIGHTCRAWLER]

[STORM]

[COLOSSUS]

[SPRING]

[EMMA FROST]

[SEBASTIAN SHAW]

[KATE PRYDE]

[WINTER]

[EXODUS]

[MISTER SINISTER]

[MYSTIQUE]

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[00_mutants_of_X]
[00_the_world__X]

[00_00....0]
[00_00...11]

Forge asked to head the recovery project.

Can you at least tell us what all this machinery *does?*

Bar "be damp and clammy"?

I asked why and he gave me a meaningful glance...

"Ororo, you *know* I've got experience cleaning up when science goes bad.

"It'll be a nice change cleaning up *someone else's* mess."

I smiled, a ray of light through my storm cloud.

Sometimes it's easy to remember why we were together.

Go ahead.

Okay, this is what we've got.

We had every science brain we had go in.

We double-checked all of the genetic database. We got nothing.

Then we went back to the gym and worked out a whole new routine...

...and then we found it.

FORGE REPORT

Okay. Listen up. This is how Sinister did it. He created a sub-dimensional loop in the DNA sample. It coils into another dimension. It's almost totally invisible. There's a one-base pair stitch. That's the only sign he's been messing. Needle in a haystack is easier than this.

In there, there's a whole other genome. Toxic as hell, all manner of active cytoplasmic hunter/killer watchdogs just sitting there, waiting to attack. I'm not sure we can get in there and nose around...

...but we can just excise the loop.

We remove the loop, the genetics are lost in time and space, and the genome should be all back to normal.

Well, thank god and thank *you*, Forge.

The relief is palpable. They're going to be freed from the bomb in their every cell.

I let them have that moment.

It won't last.

Activating.

So...now that we've washed that awful man right out of my genes, we should return to council business.

First, what about--?

NO.

What is this calumny?! The cancer has been purged.

Forge. Explain.

Yeah...I *think* it's removed. Did I get it all? I dunno. Will it come back? I dunno.

We missed it before, after all.

Who knows what *other* tricks Sinister has left in you?

So we're being careful. Xavier is removed from resurrection duties. We have the Cuckoos covering.

Hope's work will continue at a reduced rate, but anyone she brings back will go through Forge's cleaning process...and be under psychic surveillance.

They could be compromised too.

Hmm. And our votes on the council?

Until we can find a way to be *really* sure?

You don't have any.

What?! This is court politics of the basest sort!

No, Exodus. Ororo wouldn't play such games. Irene, perhaps...

My heart swells...

...but the real problem here is that they're asking us to prove a negative. One can *never* be sure.

Now, I only wish to protect Krakoa, but if you wish to excise us from the council, this is--

...and crashes.

There's something you need to see.

Mother Righteous provided a detailed historical record of the timeline.

Rasputin provided psychic access to herself to corroborate it.

I have nothing to hide.

Rasputin has a certain self-righteousness there, which makes me worry.

She is a true believer in Krakoa.

We've seen where that can lead.

A film?

We can surely do this more quickly with telepathy.

We could, but we won't.

I need you to do this the old-fashioned way.

I don't want it to be quick. I want it to linger. I want them to have time to think.

Because my only hope?

Is that they realize why this can't go on.

As they take their seats, I watch and wait.

As the film plays, I watch their faces, their whispers, their occasional sob.

And when it's over...

...I watch some more.

And *hope.*

My messiah, I--

Stay the @#%& away!

Tell us.

What do you need from us?

Beat them raw with the stick...

...and now a carrot.

We can't be seen to publicly dismiss *another* four members. It would look like chaos.

And we can't afford to lose any of your input.

You sit on the council. We keep up appearances.

You just don't vote.

Plus, Rasputin will be your personal security at all times.

Is that safe? I mean no offense--but she is a creation of Sinister, yes?

Sinister created me *explicitly* to be free of his influence. That was the only way to make sure all the other Sinisters couldn't control me.

He bound me with lies, not genetics.

I understand. But what has happened while we've been gone? The Moiras? Destiny's machinations?

How can we--?

Come with me...

"...I need your talents."

Welcome back, Charles. You're looking well.

I am not well. I have been in a purgatory and learned I carry the sins of a galaxy. Can we skip the pleasantries?

You knew about the Moira engine.

You're clever, Irene. You really couldn't find a way to tell us?

It was always too big a risk. I didn't know where the engine was.

I prodded Nathaniel's ego so he'd continue rather than reset while trying not to give away what I knew.

I tried to maneuver to timelines where we could be rid of him.

And one was the Red Diamond timeline.

In that future, you tricked me into stealing the Moira engine.

You knew where keeping it led. You knew how many people died.

You know how to deactivate the X-Gene, as you did with the real Moira. Why didn't you deactivate it when you had the chance?

I don't know. That decision was made by me in the future. I am not that woman.

Now I will never be that woman.

That's not an answer.

I will know if you lie directly, Irene. I don't need to read your mind for that.

I am very good at what I do.

After the timeline opened up after the destruction of the Moira engine, the future is a tangle.

I'm still trying to make sense of all I see... but I remember visions of Ororo's future self believing that we couldn't access the Moiras without risking activating them.

We may have been able to steal the lab, but it was trapped in a nearly indestructible shell, and Sinister was sure to have left fail-safes.

As such, she chose to guard it rather than risk having deaths beyond imagining.

But *my* choices?

The Moira engine has played havoc with my gifts. Timelines end. Causality breaks. Time is no longer linear. Earlier events make no sense because I don't know what later events led to them.

I saw scenes in a larger movie, out of order.

I saw some timelines where after a reset, the Moira engine would be destroyed. I saw Rasputin arresting him. I saw timelines where Rasputin was created.

I presume that when I was later in the timeline I saw how they tied together more clearly.

That Sinister couldn't reset would have meant my gift was more reliable. I could gaze out until the Moiras were found, so I could plan.

As such, I presume I guided us toward a nexus where a vengeful Rasputin would ally with Mother Righteous.

You can say thank you now, if you wish.

You're hiding a truth behind a truth.

There's something else, isn't there? You say there were multiple timelines where Sinister could have fallen. You chose ***this*** one.

Why did you keep ***that*** timeline running?

This meeting ends now.

You don't get to dictate that.

I am not dictating anything. I am merely saying what will be.

Charles?

I...

Quickly!

"...There appears to be an altercation above Krakoa."

You JUDAS!

I'll stop them. But you should know this, Irene.

You cannot hide the truth from me for long.

Oh, Ororo...

"...it is not *you* I am trying to hide the truth from."

Hello, ducky.

Don't worry. I--

You *are* a feisty one.

Don't trust me?

I don't trust anyone.

That the knife isn't embedded in your face shows I trust you more than most.

What do you want?

Sinister's files from the future are a big ol' mess, dear. So much stuff, all piled up. Trying to make sure the right stuff gets to the right people.

I found a message from Irene to Sinister.

Just wanted to drop it off.

I'll make sure she gets it.

Good, good.

Though you should know...

...it's about you.

"Thank you, Mother Righteous."

Hmph.

Thank you.

Hello, Nathaniel.

I stole your lab with Storm, Stellaris and the Arakkii. If you're listening to this, they'll have hidden it again, when I tried to reset the universe.

This will be because Raven is dead. And if Raven is dead...

CLICK

...Oh god, I hate myself. She would hate me for thi--

My strike would shatter a mountain.

Enough! What are you doing?!

It pains me to admit that, in my present mood, to let loose releases a little tension...

...and for those as powerful as Exodus and Hope, it is merely as if I threw water in their faces.

He saw what happened in that future and *still* expects me to have anything to do with him.

It has been hard for *all* of Krakoa. You know how much you mean to everyone.

The leader of the Five and her shield, who stood defiant on Judgment Day...

...do you want them to see you like this?

Crap.

It was a hell. I grieve. I will do penance, but it changes nothing about us, my messiah.

If you do not wish to fight, the fight is over. I would not strike you.

And it is only by you taking my powers that a fight continue.

Do you know what "Omega-level power manipulator" means?

It's not memory banks, range or the accessories. You killed me in the timeline by leaving me behind.

Omega means there's no limit to what I can do when manipulating powers.

Your god gives and your god takes away.

Now me and you, let's go.

I weigh as much as four of you, girl.

You're not going to fight me.

Yeah, I'm not going to fight you.

I'm going to kick your @&$#%&@ ass.

Yeah, if you were on a horse and charging at me with a lance, I'm sure you'd be pretty hot @&#%, you @#%&...

...but *I* learned to fight by sparring with *my dad,* and he's bigger than you!

"Your god gives and your god takes away."

Look what you've done to me, Exodus.

Stay away.

I'm not your messiah.

You're not a church.

I'm sorry, Ororo.

There're no words.

Regret. Shame. Anger. It's what I need to see.

I believe she can change...

...though I have insufficient time to ascertain how true that is of the rest.

The Empty Seat will be Empty no more When Ororo comes.

One second, Lodus Logos.

I have to go, Charles.

Don't you want to talk about Max?

I learned that my worst fears about my capacity were hopelessly naive.

I cannot handle talking about the death of my oldest friend yet.

I see the pain. My instincts call out to comfort him...

I will contact you when I want to talk.

...and then it's gone. There he is. Even in his desolation, he is himself, and that is enough to make ***me*** despair. He has not changed enough...

Ah, Charles. Why waste a good insult on him when I can cut to the chase and just say "Well, ***he's*** a prick"?

...and neither has she.

Perhaps. I note you are taking this better than the other three.

I've been a villain before. I'm used to shame.

But we weren't truly ourselves. Sinister unlocked our worst selves, but we ***aren't*** our worst selves, no matter what others think of us.

My time in the Hellfire Club taught me that.

It's not just what you did ***then.***

It's what you did now-- it is a future wrought from your ***present*** games.

I'm unsure why you think ***you're*** in a position to judge us.

"No thrones on Arakko"...and you end up worshipped as some kind of distaff King Arthur?

Is that irony, or is that just your subtext becoming text? Methinks the monarch protests too much...

How ***dare*** you?

Oh, I dare. Because I think you've missed something key about that awful future.

You were a hero. Well done. But you were ***yourself*** every second of that future...

...and it was ***five years*** until you realized anything was wrong.

Five years of Arakko filling your oh-so-busy schedule while ***we*** were drowning.

"What did you do?" What the hell did ***you*** do?

You did ***nothing,*** until it was too late.

Our great ring turns poorly
With a lost spoke
Your duty calls. Come!

You are on the Quiet Council for a reason.

And with ***our*** votes gone, we need ***you*** more than ever.

And you're ***still*** about to pop off and play Ororo Munroe on Mars!

Never forget: Whatever mess happens when your back is turned is on you too, Goddess!

"*Hmm.* Emma and Ororo. Fighting. A disappointment..."

...one always hopes it escalates into a catfight and--

Why are you pawing it? You can't pass through. You're not a mutant.

I know. Just admiring it. Lovely work. A nice piece, semiotically speaking.

A load of magic circles connecting the world...

Interesting.

But a gate isn't the magic circle that I'm interested in today.

I'm interested in *your* circle. You've played your part well, Shaw.

We've got a budding business relationship. I wasn't going to blow it all up by revealing the new friend of Krakoa was the money behind Selene's power play.

And I was thinking we should develop *our* relationship.

This place is tipping. It's all about to go south.

Krakoa is rich. If it ***does*** go down, I want it all. I want to ***own*** Krakoa.

Can you arrange that?

I think I can...but I want something more practical than a "*thank-you*" in return.

To use your position on the council to propose certain motions...

Hmph. These will never pass. Even with four votes gone, ***never.***

Oh, I don't know.

Democracy has been known to be a wobbly old girl.

Days later.

Emma is not indestructible. She lashes out when she hurts. I know her words were her only weapon, so she used them.

I know all this, and it makes no difference.

The weapon landed. She was right. And if ***they*** have to change, ***I*** must too.

Thanks for meeting. This is... delicate.

I fear the situation between Charles and myself is deteriorating...

...and I have become aware of a certain truth.

I have responsibilities on two worlds, and I am not Jamie Madrox. I can't be in two places at once.

He didn't trust people to do the job. He thinks himself a god-king.

Conversely, I know we only make this work if we all work together.

There will inevitably be council business when I am not present.

It would be a dereliction of my duty to both to step down from ***either*** council.

But my split attention also causes ***problems*** for both.

I hear myself echo Charles here in my belief that I am essential... but the difference is key. Or, I hope it is.

I need someone to speak when I am not there-- someone I can trust to be a bulwark against the council's excesses.

If an emergency situation ***demands*** it...I want you to be my proxy and vote appropriately.

Will you?

You can rely on me.

[Immortal_[0.11]

NEXT

“In Colossus We Trust”

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- Betsy Braddock: Captain Britain #4
- Deadpool #7

ZONE